REMARKS

Claims 1-30 are pending in this application. Claims 1, 4-7, and 9-17 have been previously withdrawn.

Claims Rejections – 35 USC § 103

In the Office Action dated March 27, 2006, claims 2, 3, 8 and 18-30 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent Application Publication US 2002/0107950 A1 to Lu ("Lu") in view of U.S. Patent Publication US 2006/0036701 to Bulfer et al. ("Bulfer") and in further view of U.S. Patent Publication US 2002/0194177 A1 to Sherman et al. ("Sherman"). The Applicant respectfully traverses these rejections.

At page 5 of the Office Action, the Examiner admits that both Lu and Bulfer fail to teach "once the electronic message is approved or rejected by one approver, updating a display for the at least one other approver according to a changed status for the electronic message." To supply that which is missing from Lu and Bulfer, the Examiner turns to Sherman. In particular, the Examiner points to the subfolder synchronization Sherman teaches at figures 5, 8A and 8B, and at paragraphs [0045], [0059], [0065] and [0075].

A careful reading of Sherman reveals that it does not teach or suggest updating a display according to a changed status for an electronic message. The description from Sherman that the Examiner cites is directed only to folders, and not to the e-mail messages or other information structures stored within the folders. The thrust of the Sherman reference in general, and of the text the Examiner cites in particular, is synchronization and other processing as applied to folders and subfolders, but not to the messages residing within those folders.

Sherman pointedly does not apply the synchronization processes it teaches to e-mail messages. Notice that Sherman does not ignore the subject of e-mail messages – rather, Sherman describes e-mail messages in peripheral contexts, unrelated to the synchronization that is the focus of the patent (see, for example, paragraph [0026]). In fact, Sherman teaches that the synchronization concepts it describes may be applied in other contexts, such as to file directories, task categories, notes, contacts and other categories of information (see paragraph [0077], but Sherman pointedly excludes e-mail messages. All of the alternative embodiments

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called out in Sherman are directed to categories <u>related</u> to the e-mail messages, but are specifically <u>not directed to the e-mail messages themselves</u>.

In summary, Sherman discusses e-mail messages, and could have included e-mail messages as subject matter for an alternative embodiment of the synchronization concepts it teaches, but specifically chose not to do so. Sherman does not teach updating a display according to a changed status for an electronic message.
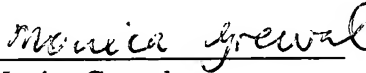
Independent claims 18 and 26 both require updating a display according to a <u>changed status for an electronic message</u>. The Examiner admits that neither Lu nor Bulfer teach this limitation, and as described above, Sherman does not supply that which is missing from Lu and Bulfer. Therefore claims 18 and 26 should be allowable.

Since claims 2, 3, 19-25 depend from allowable claim 18, and claims 8 and 27-30 depend from allowable claim 26, those claims should also be allowable.

In view of the above remarks, applicant believes the pending application is in condition for allowance. Please charge any fees not covered or credit any overpayments to Deposit Account No. 08-0219.

Respectfully submitted,

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